

City snapshot: City Manager search; planning commission

By Sue Stafford
Correspondent

• Jensen Strategies LLC of Portland has been selected to conduct the search for a new permanent city manager. They were chosen from a field of three firms. Jensen is fairly new in the recruitment field and eager to show what they can do. Their bid of a \$15,000 flat fee was the lowest. Because of their other business endeavors, they have broader skills than a classic recruiting firm. They also facilitate conflict resolution and have facilitation skills. They will work directly with Sisters City Council to determine what the City is looking for in a city manager and will build the search for the individuals who fit the description as closely as possible. A new city manager should be in place by June 2017, at the latest.

• Council reappointed three members to the Sisters Planning Commission: David Gentry, who has served as chairman; Jeff Seymour; and Bob Wright. The Transportation Safety Plan (TSP) modification committee will have two more members, recently appointed by the Council: Pat Thompson, former City Councilor, and Sheryl Rudolf, founder of FITS equestrian clothing.

• Bids were received for construction of the Highway 20 roundabout, and Knife River in Tumalo came in

with the lowest bid at \$2.8 million. The original estimate by ODOT was \$3.6 million, making the winning bid a considerable cost savings. The City has received a \$200,000 grant to cover the cost of the art installation in the center of the roundabout. The funds were enhanced due to the fact that the roundabout is part of a scenic corridor. The contractor will break ground in February, and a majority of the work will be completed by Memorial Day, which marks the beginning of tourist season. Some additions have been made to the plans, with pedestrian improvements and an extended median all the way to Railway Avenue to the west of the roundabout.

• Council approved System Development Charge (SDC) waivers for the seven-unit development at Skygate, the affordable homes built by Impact Housing. The waivers for water, sewer, parks, and transportation amount to approximately \$9,000 per unit for a total of \$63,000. These will be straight waivers with no impact on the general fund or fund balance transfers, so there are no additional accounting requirements. The waivers partially reduce the cost of construction, making it possible for the homes to sell for \$120,000.

• Sisters Habitat for Humanity also was granted SDC waivers for parks and transportation on nine units in Village Meadows. The

waivers from the City amount to \$2,200 per unit for a total of \$19,800. Habitat received a HUD grant to cover the sewer and water SDCs.

• Oregon Parks and Recreation Department has awarded a grant to the City to partially cover the cost of replacing the old restroom/shower building at Creekside Campground. The grant is for \$270,000 to be matched with \$135,000 from the City, with half coming from the SDC fund and the other half from a number of other funds. The building will be double the size of the old one, increasing capacity to accommodate growth in the use of the campground. Public Works Director Paul Bertagna says the new building will be completed and online by mid-April, prior to the opening of the campground for the season.

• Council approved the awarding of a contract to FCS Group of Seattle for sewer and water rate consultation services. The City has a fiduciary responsibility to fully fund the water and sewer services, and the rates have been frozen for a number of years. FCS, with a bid of \$36,615 (approximately \$18,000 per utility), was thought to be far superior to

the other candidates because of their Oregon rate experience. Public Works Director Paul Bertagna was able to get FCS to reduce their bid to \$29,278, which includes three trips to Sisters.

FCS will be studying all the rates, how they are determined, and whether they are adequately covering all current and future expenditures. There are a number of different methods for determining and implementing water and sewer rates, and the final result of the study will be recommendations from FCS for the best method to be used here in Sisters. City Manager Rick Allen said the City needs the professional help from people who do this for a living. It is beyond the scope of staff's expertise. The study will be done in fiscal year 2016-17, with new rates to take effect January 2018.

• At the December meeting of the Urban Forestry Board, City Forester Dan Galecki reported on five ponderosa trees located in the Creekside Campground, three of which are dead and two unhealthy. Two are located near the bathroom, one dead and one deformed and in poor condition. They will probably be removed at the time the new bathroom goes in this

winter.

Another ponderosa, located at Campsite No. 58, is completely dead and has already been approved for removal. Galecki reported there is an unusual black stain coming out of the bark, a condition he has never seen before in a ponderosa. The other two trees are past the dog run area. One has suffered beetle kill and should be removed. The other is approximately 75 feet tall and has been tagged before because of its condition, which is worsening. Galecki said it already has a number of holes and burrows in it being used by wildlife. He recommends keeping it as a wildlife tree, provided provisions can be made to prevent it from being a danger to campers. For now, it will be observed for its condition and any potential danger it may pose.